



VILLAGE OF ELLSWORTH

Comprehensive Plan Update 2022

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The people of Ellsworth for their engagement throughout the process to create a plan that incorporates goals reflecting the issues and opportunities they identified.

The Steering Committee members who spent many hours working to ensure the plan reflects the values and priorities of Ellsworth residents.

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Historical, Regional and Location Context

The Wisconsin Territory was established in 1836 on the original territories of the great Native American Tribal Nations including the Ojibwe, Dakota, Menominee, Potawatomi, and Chippewa and on May 29, 1848, Wisconsin became the 30th state to join the Union. Pierce County is home to sacred burial mounds that remain in the western bluffs, prosperous farm fields, lakes and rivers, dense forests, and a myriad of wildlife that attracted French explorers during the 17th century utilizing the Great Lakes water ways to discover, map, and trade with the First Nation Tribes. Homesteads and settlements grew and thrived within the landscape of abundant natural resources.

Ellsworth was first known as the Town of Perry. The name of Ellsworth was chosen to honor Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth, an officer who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Perry was renamed in 1866 to Ellsworth as there was an existing Village of Perry elsewhere in the state, the first settlers in Perry (Ellsworth) included Anthony Huddleston, C.B. Bruce, E.M. Bruce, Wilson Kinnely, and their families. On March 15, 1861, voters cast ballots and moved the county seat to Perry, which was near the geographical center and highest point of Pierce County. The town was platted as a village in 1862 and incorporated under Wisconsin law in 1887.

The Omaha Railroad established a depot in East Ellsworth in 1885. At first it was a separate and independent area from Ellsworth due to the depot location. Ellsworth and East Ellsworth have since merged into the Village of Ellsworth.

Today the Village of Ellsworth is the county seat of Pierce County and sits at the convergence of major highways 63, 65, 72, and 10 that provide access for travel in all directions.



Trimbelle, Beldenville, Lawton, and Town of Ellsworth surround the village along with farm fields, transportation, commerce, and industry. Ellsworth has land that is rated as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance according to the United States Department of Agriculture. These land designations allow for recognition of the quality of the soils and continued production on these lands is highly valued to the farmers that tend them. Ellsworth has many natural resources and community strengths that continue to make the village a wonderful place to live, work, and enjoy.

Comprehensive Planning Law

Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law requires every city, town, and village be organized with a comprehensive plan by January 1, 2010. These Planning Laws or Smart Growth Laws spur short-, medium-, and long-term decision making for cohesive community growth. Since these laws were passed in October 1999 public participation has been also required and is integrated throughout the entire process. Public participation was not required for adoption of local plans before 1999 thus separating residents from the processes for growth of their surrounding community.

State Statutes require the plans include the nine focused elements for each sector of the community. The nine elements are:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

Planning and smart growth that incorporate these nine elements capture the way all parts of a community must be included for advancement forward. Communities that understand how these areas align and affect residents can then start to create their vision for the future. The Village of Ellsworth has

included these elements into the community capacity, connectivity, character, and content of the comprehensive plan.

Plan Purpose

A Comprehensive Plan showcases how planning and organizing for future growth allows communities to utilize all resources to their full potential. It provides direction for reviewing and updating ordinances; preserving natural, cultural, and historic places; strengthening communications within the Village among all departments and organizations; promoting economic growth and revitalization; repairing, expanding, and upgrading utilities; growing housing inventories; ensuring fiscal responsibility; developing and planning for environmental sustainability and encompassing the community's vision.

The Village of Ellsworth will use the Comprehensive Plan as a framework to direct action for the issues that are important to community residents. The purpose of the Plan is to implement necessary changes in a thoughtful, contextual, and timely manner.

Process of Planning and Public Engagement

The Planning process began in December 2021 with a visual inventory of all mapped properties within the Village limits to confirm current property use, condition, and correlating zoning uses. An inventory of all sidewalks was taken as well to determine connectivity conditions within the village.

The Village Steering Committee met in January 2022, additionally a meeting with the Village of Ellsworth Chamber of Commerce and local members to discuss the Comprehensive Plan purpose, processes, goals, and involvement. A survey was created for residents and stakeholders to fill out for their views, opinions, and comments. The survey was available online and hard copies were available throughout the village during February 2022 and well over 600 responses were received.

The resulting data and current demographic analysis were presented to the public and the land use committee during town halls in March 2022.

Demographic information is necessary as it highlights where the community is and how that translates into future needs. Housing, education, medical and emergency services, utilities, economic growth, and Village budgets and funding programs rely on current population and growth projection. Village residents and town hall participants discussed and prioritized specific points and areas of concern to be addressed.

April, May, and June 2022 were opportunities to meet with focus groups and village administration to identify distinct needs within the community. An extensive public engagement process produces more opportunity for residents to voice their opinions.

The writing process commenced in July and August 2022 to outline, highlight, and draft the Plan Narrative Draft and the Draft Implementation Guide. Once the draft was completed, it was circulated to the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and community leaders for review before being presented to the Plan Commission for a recommendation to the Village Board in August. Upon approval from the Plan Commission, the plan was adopted by the Village Board in September.

Plan Content

Based on the input from Ellsworth residents, four key topics were identified to organize the Plan. Goals within each of these topic areas align with the nine required topics required by law. The four topic areas identified are:

1. Community Capacity
2. Community Connectivity
3. Community Character
4. Community Content

Organizing the plan in this fashion allows the goals to align with community values and priorities and ensures clear direction for implementation.

Demographic Analysis

A demographic and economic analysis provides critical data for city planning, infrastructure, land use, emergency services, employment scales and future growth projections.

Whether hosting Pierce County fairs since 1884 or being “The Cheese Curd Capital of Wisconsin”, Ellsworth is the County seat of Pierce County with a diverse economy based on manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. Located approximately 40 miles from the Twin Cities, Ellsworth provides rural character with access to a major metropolitan area. This location and diversity of opportunities has contributed to consistent growth in the Village that is expected to continue. Growth presents an opportunity for the community, but efforts need to be made to ensure development happens that is in line with community values and priorities.

Population

Ellsworth has seen consistent growth over the last 40 years, with a population more than 50% larger than in 1980. This is expected given its location in proximity to the Twin Cities and the high quality of life, education, and opportunities in the community. Pierce County has also seen consistent growth as the northern part of the County has suburbanized.

Table 1: Population

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Village of Ellsworth	2,143	2,706	2,909	3,284	3,348
Pierce County	31,149	32,765	36,804	41,019	42,212

Source: US Census, Wisconsin Department of Administration

Over the next 20 years, Ellsworth can expect existing patterns of growth to continue, although at a somewhat slower rate. It is important to note that projections are just that, they are not set in stone and many things may

influence future development. This includes the potential for more growth in high quality, rural communities like Ellsworth in response to the COVID pandemic. People looking for a small town while maintaining access to the city may see Ellsworth as a desirable option. The rate of growth is steady but not so fast that it can overwhelm infrastructure, schools, roads, and other facilities. Rapid growth can also significantly change the character and identity of a community, Ellsworth is fortunate that growth rates are expected to be manageable and allow for opportunity without being overwhelming.

Table 2: Population Estimates and Projections

	2021 (Est.)	2026	2030	2040
Village of Ellsworth	3,451	3,513	3,670	3,725
Pierce County	43,794	45,086	46,125	46,825

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, ESRI Business Analyst

Age

Compared to many rural communities, Ellsworth has a relatively young population. Over 25% of the population are 19 or younger and less than 20% is aged 65+. The median age is 38.4, which is slightly younger than Wisconsin as a whole (39.5 years). This is an indication that Ellsworth is a desirable community for families and means there should be a focus on ensuring adequate facilities, amenities, and services to support families and youth. It may also represent a need for additional services and housing for seniors who may have to move from Ellsworth as they age because of a lack of services for them, especially housing.

Table 3: Age (2021)

Age	Count	Percent
0 – 4	231	6.7%
5 – 9	240	7.0%
10 – 14	249	7.2%
20 – 24	188	5.4%
25 – 34	457	13.2%
35 – 44	475	13.8%
45 – 54	414	12.0%
55 – 64	438	12.7%
65 – 74	322	9.3%
75 – 84	166	4.8%
85+	87	2.5%
Median Age	38.4	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Race and Ethnicity

Ellsworth residents identify overwhelmingly as White, which is typical for rural Wisconsin communities. Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, not a race, so respondents can select Hispanic and a race (e.g., Hispanic and White, or Hispanic and Black, etc.).

Table 4: Race and Ethnicity (2021)

Race	Count	Percent
White	3,279	95.0%
Black	19	0.6%
American Indian	14	0.4%
Asian	19	0.6%
Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
Some Other Race	38	1.1%
Two or More Races	82	2.4%
Hispanic (Any Race)	74	2.1%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Educational Attainment

Ellsworth Community schools enroll 1,644 students across all grades per the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Overall, the District is rated as exceeds expectations and has no schools that do not meet expectations based

on state requirements. This evidence of quality is likely one of the primary reasons Ellsworth is an attractive location for families who want to ensure quality education for their children.

Approximately 92% of the population aged 25+ has at least a high school degree, and around 20% have a bachelor's or Graduate degree. This relatively high level of educational attainment makes Ellsworth an attractive destination for prospective businesses, although there remains an opportunity for continuing education and workforce training to ensure all residents have the skills and capacity for career success.

Table 5: Educational Attainment 25+

Attainment	Count	Percent
Population 25+	2,245	100%
<9 th Grade	69	3.1%
HS, No Diploma	101	4.5%
HS Diploma or equivalent	858	38.2%
Some College, no Degree	500	22.3%
Associates Degree	275	12.2%
Bachelor's Degree	311	13.9%
Graduate Degree	131	5.8%

Source: American Community Survey

Housing

Like most rural communities, most of the housing is detached, single family homes. This reflects the rural character of Ellsworth and the desire for families to have a home with a yard and space. However, given changing characteristics of households, family make up, and desired living arrangements, there may be a need for greater housing diversity going forward. This would allow more options for young families, single person households, and even older residents looking to downsize to a home with less maintenance needs than a typical single-family home. Because the Census has still not released all the 2020 data, much of the housing data comes from the American Community Survey, which

is a rolling 5-year estimate and ESRI Business Analyst, which is a proprietary data tool that is widely used by planners and communities in developing demographic analyses.

Table 3: Housing Characteristics (Occupied Structures)

Units in Structure	Count	Percent
Total Occupied Housing Units	1,369	100%
1, detached	940	69.2%
1, attached	128	9.4%
2 Unit	68	5.0%
3-4 Units	74	5.4%
5-9 Units	12	0.9%
10+ Units	69	5.1%
Manufactured Homes	68	5.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2019

Most homes in Ellsworth are owner-occupied, but not as high a percentage as might be expected, with only approximately 60% of units owned. Additionally, just over 7% of units are considered vacant. This may be homes used seasonally or for vacation purposes, but also may simply be unoccupied. This may be an issue as the potential for these properties to become blighted may be an issue. It is important to note that the table above uses an estimate from 2019 and the one below uses 2021 estimates, which is why the totals are slightly different.

Table 4: Occupancy (2021)

Occupancy	Count	Percent
Total Occupied Units	1,413	92.6
Owner	917	60.1%
Renter	496	32.5%
Vacant	113	7.4%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Ellsworth has a diversity of housing values, with nearly 30% of homes valued under \$150,000. This means that finding an affordable home is possible for most prospective buyers. This may be affected somewhat by the fact that much of the housing in Ellsworth is aging, with more than 50% of homes having been built

prior to 1980. This means homes may require significant renovations and upgrades because of their age.

Table 5: Housing Values Owner Occupied (2021)

Value	Count	Percent
<\$50,000	25	2.7%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	79	8.6%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	165	18.0%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	265	29.0%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	166	18.1%
\$250,000 - \$299,999	72	7.9%
\$300,000 - \$399,999	81	8.9%
\$400,000 - \$499,999	18	2.0%
\$500,000+	7	0.7%
Median Value	\$185,566	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Income and Employment

Ellsworth has a diversity of businesses and growing economic opportunity. According to Momentum West, the regional economic development organization, there are 185 businesses employing 2,114 people in the community. The largest employers include public administration, educational services, and healthcare. Retail establishments are another major employer. Ellsworth has two business parks to support business development, along with an active Chamber of Commerce and strong partnerships with regional providers like Momentum West and Pierce County Economic Development. These partnerships support Ellsworth in serving existing businesses and attracting new businesses to town.

Additionally, Ellsworth is the 'Cheese Curd Capital of Wisconsin' and the home of Ellsworth Creamery, a major employer and community attraction. It hosts events and festivals, including the Pierce County Fair, throughout the year that attract tourists and provide community-building for residents.

Table 6: Employment by Trade

Trade	Count
Total Employees	2,114
Agriculture / Forestry	8
Construction	39
Manufacturing	74
Wholesale Trade	33
Retail Trade	184
Transportation / Warehouse	35
Information	1
Finance / Insurance	75
Real Estate	52
Professional / Technology	103
Legal Services	18
Admin / Support	8
Educational Services	249
Healthcare / Social Services	244
Arts / Entertainment / Rec	4
Accommodation / Food Svc	206
Public Administration	620
Auto Repair	9
Other Services	174

Source: Momentum West

The median household income in Ellsworth is fairly high at \$71,814, which is higher than the state (\$61,747) but slightly lower than Pierce County overall (\$75,603). Based on the median income, housing in Ellsworth is largely affordable; however, there may still be challenges for renters to find available rental units and for prospective buyers to find suitable homes. Also, over 20% of Ellsworth households are making less than \$35,000 per year. Ensuring economic vitality and opportunity for all residents will be a key issue for Ellsworth moving forward.

Table 7: Income (2021)

Income	Count	Percent
<\$15,000	105	7.4%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	59	4.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	153	10.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	136	9.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	279	19.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	298	21.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	257	18.2%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	105	7.4%
\$200,000+	21	1.5%
Median Household Income	\$71,814	

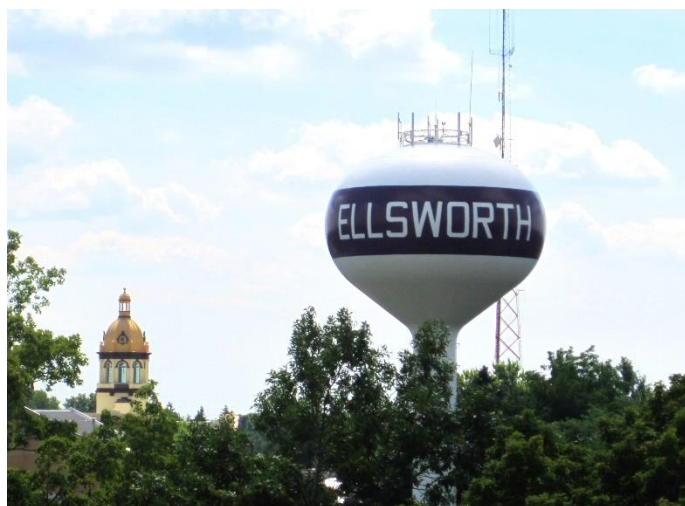
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Conclusion

Ellsworth has seen steady growth for several decades and can expect that trend to continue. The rate of growth is enough to create new opportunities and encourage business development, yet not be at a rate that could potentially strain infrastructure capacity. By undertaking this planning effort, Ellsworth can position itself to benefit from expected growth and ensure that future development is in line with community values and priorities. This includes by identifying desired development areas, adopting policies to encourage development in those areas, and by protecting community values and priorities in development decisions. The existing conditions in Ellsworth indicate that the community is in a good place, with a diverse economy, accessible housing options, and strong quality of life. These assets will continue to attract new residents and businesses to the area and contribute to future success.

Community Capacity

Community capacity is focused on ensuring the Village of Ellsworth has the resources necessary to achieve the overall goals of the comprehensive plan and ensure basic community needs are met. The goals identified here relate to several of the nine required topics outlined in the Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan law including: Issues and Opportunities, Housing, Utilities and Community



Facilities, Economic Development, and Inter-governmental Cooperation. Focusing resources and attention on achieving these goals will lay the foundation for future success and ensure the Village has the tools in place to support sustainable development and high quality of life for current

and future residents. Building community capacity involves the following goals, discussed in more detail below:

- Expand Wastewater Capacity
- Develop Plan for old Junior High School
- Review and Revise Village Ordinances to Support Community Goals
- Expand Code Enforcement to Ensure Consistent Compliance with Regulations and Standards
- Expand Village Staff to Support Community Projects
- Support and Build Capacity at Local Organizations

The goals identified in this section are primarily intended for Village government; however, the final goal does represent an opportunity for community action to coordinate action from various community organizations and volunteers.

Additionally, achieving all these goals requires engagement with the community to build support and ensure adequate funding for success.

Expand Wastewater Capacity

The wastewater treatment plant is approaching capacity, which places a significant impediment on future development. Ensuring adequate wastewater treatment capacity is a priority to support expected commercial and residential growth. Not having this capacity places Ellsworth at a disadvantage in encouraging businesses to expand or locate in Ellsworth and limits the opportunity for residential growth as well. Expanding capacity at the plant will be a significant expense but is necessary to ensure adequate service for the future.

The first step is to conduct evaluations of the current system to determine current conditions. This may include smoke testing to identify areas where stormwater infiltration and / or leaks may be occurring, and other tests. Conducting these evaluations as part of other improvement / upgrade projects may reduce the costs and allow for additional funding to be secured to help fund testing. These evaluations are necessary to have a thorough understanding of how the system is currently functioning and may identify opportunities for small scale fixes and improvements to address issues. These tests will require funding; however, the cost of tests may result in small scale fixes that save money in the long run. The Village should work with utility staff to develop an evaluation program and look for funding assistance to help with this.

Additionally, staff has identified some issues that can be resolved to help in reducing wastewater service demands. This includes storm drains that are currently connected to the sanitary sewer system. These drains put significant strain on the sanitary system during storm events and are likely contributing to capacity issues. It may be beneficial to work with property owners to re-route these drains to allow stormwater runoff to flow into the stormwater system rather than the sanitary system to reduce demand. Addressing this and other infiltration points (found through smoke testing) can make significant impact on capacity issues without the expense of a major system expansion.

Low impact development standards (LID) are another relatively low cost tool for addressing stormwater issues. LID is about managing stormwater on-site through more natural features like rain gardens, bioswales, etc. The goal is to keep stormwater on-site, allowing it to infiltrate into the soil rather than running off into waterbodies or infiltrating the sanitary sewer system. LID features can be retrofitted into existing developments (e.g. adding a rain garden to an existing lawn or redesigning landscaping to allow for infiltration) or included in new development. It also can be cheaper to include LID facilities over more conventional stormwater detention ponds and similar infrastructure. It provides reduced maintenance costs over the life of the project as well as being more visually appealing and safe for the public. Details about LID can be found here <https://www.epa.gov/nps/urban-runoff-low-impact-development#:~:text=The%20term%20low%20impact%20development,quality%20and%20associated%20aquatic%20habitat>.

Updating Village ordinances to require LID in new development would be beneficial for the Village, developers, and overall water quality.

Even with improvements at the margins, it is likely the Village will need to expand its wastewater capacity in the near future. This will require significant financial investment which may mean a bond referendum to pay for the needed expansion. The Village should begin research all available funding options and pursue all opportunities for state and federal grants that may be available. Securing the services of a grant writer may be worthwhile to consider to assist in this effort. The state has funding resources available (<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/Sources.html>) as a starting point. The Village should also consider an education and outreach campaign to inform residents about the need for wastewater expansion to begin developing support in case a bond is needed to fund the project. This effort will likely take time so should be started as soon as possible because of the capacity issues already identified.

Develop Plan for old Junior High School

The Village recently purchased the old Junior High School. This property has been vacant for many years and is blighted. The purchase of the school represents an opportunity for the Village to turn a liability into an asset through the redevelopment of the space into much needed housing and open space. The initial challenge is to acquire funding for demolition of the building. Given likely presence of lead paint and potentially asbestos, demolition will be more expensive because of needed mitigation. The Village is currently pursuing funding from Pierce County and other sources to aid in offsetting the costs of demolition.

The Village has created an information packet that highlights the benefits of redeveloping the site along with a demonstration of community needs that redevelopment would address, focusing on the need for multi-family



housing. This package includes an informal site plan showing the potential for the site to be repurposed for housing. The location of the property is central to the community and redevelopment would benefit the neighborhood by removing a blighted eyesore and replacing it with new housing. The project has significant support from major employers, community leaders, and the public and should be pursued as a high priority. Once funding has been secured for demolition, the Village can pivot to marketing the property to prospective developers to take ownership and develop the property into a community asset.

Review and Revise Village Ordinances to Support Community Goals

The primary tool the Village has for achieving community goals is through its ordinances and regulations. It is vital that these are reviewed and updated to incorporate best practices. This connects to the next goal regarding code enforcement to ensure properties are well-maintained and protect public health, safety, and welfare, and that Ellsworth continues to be an attractive, safe, and appealing community.

Some of the issues identified during public engagement that can be addressed through Village ordinances include issues of appearance, property maintenance and upkeep, and the use of various buildings and properties throughout Ellsworth. These issues are both an issue of code enforcement (discussed below) and having adequate ordinances to meet community goals. Village leaders should review existing ordinances to ensure they are adequate to meeting community goals in terms of things like property upkeep, building design, and so forth. It may be beneficial to empower the Plan Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of Village ordinances and make recommendations regarding revisions and improvements that are needed. The Plan Commission is an existing group that already is responsible for making recommendations regarding development and growth so has experience with these issues and can take ownership of this process. Any recommended changes can be presented to the Village Board for adoption. The Plan Commission can begin by looking for best practices in similar communities in terms of ordinances and regulations. Find a community similar to Ellsworth that can be used as an example for what Ellsworth wants to be like and start there. This is not to say that other communities' ordinances should be adopted as is, instead, they should be used to inform policies that are tailored to the needs of Ellsworth and reflect local priorities and values. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel to make revisions to ordinances.

Initial priority areas include the zoning and subdivision ordinances which regulate development. The Future Land Use plan includes some recommendations for revisions that will ensure future development meets community priorities. Other areas for review should include landscaping requirements for commercial properties to promote more attractive development. As discussed above, this can include Low Impact Development standards which will reduce stormwater runoff and can be combined with landscaping to enhance appearance and functionality of greenspaces in commercial areas. Additionally, requirements around building use, especially residential uses in commercial properties should be reviewed to protect commercial space for commercial uses. This is important to promote more appealing and welcoming commercial districts and reduce loss of commercial property to residential uses. Finally, standards for design and upkeep should be reviewed to ensure property owners are maintaining building appearance to reduce blight.

Reviewing and revising ordinances is a relatively low cost way to potentially have significant impact by ensuring existing properties are well-maintained and ensuring future development meets community goals and priorities.

Expand Code Enforcement to Ensure Consistent Compliance with Regulations and Standards

In addition to revising ordinances, there is a need for more consistent and fair enforcement of existing ordinances. This is necessary to ensure property owners are held responsible for proper upkeep and maintenance to protect community appearance, health, and safety, as well as to ensure properties are used as intended and in line with Village regulations. The first step is to develop outreach and education so residents know what the rules are and are familiar with community expectations. It is unreasonable to simply begin strict enforcement without ensuring people know what the rules are and how to come into compliance.

The Village can begin by developing a page on the Village website that clearly outlines rules for things like vehicle storage, lawn maintenance, building appearance, and other common issues. This website can be coordinate with information included in monthly utility bills and other avenues to communicate with residents. The goal is to make it very easy for people to find relevant information and understand expectations so when enforcement begins they are aware of the standards. This should also include resources for residents who may need assistance coming into compliance with regulations. This may include volunteer organizations that can help with yard maintenance and so on, or other resources like WestCAP which can provide assistance with home repairs and improvements. Providing resources will help residents find assistance and potentially encourage compliance before enforcement has to take place.

Once the information piece is in place, specific violations can be targeted. Rather than starting with enforcement, more targeted information can be provided to these property owners informing them of how they are not in compliance and providing resources that can be accessed to help come into compliance. Only after attempts at soft enforcement fail should more assertive measures be taken like citations and so forth. If outreach and communication do not resolve the issues, the Village should move to more assertive enforcement. In cases of public safety, the Village may need to take action to address the issue and use fines and liens to recoup the costs. In other cases, it may be that issuing citations and fines will be sufficient to get results.

Ultimately, consistent code enforcement will require proper staffing to have the necessary personnel to conduct operations. One option may be to partner with neighboring towns and Villages to create a shared code enforcement officer position. This person could work in multiple jurisdictions to share the costs associated with the position. This may not be an ideal solution given the lack of focus on Ellsworth; however, it may be an option given limited Village resources and funding. Otherwise, the Village should consider adding a Code

Enforcement officer to the Village staff to ensure consistent code enforcement. Enforcing ordinances is a necessary part of Village management and promotes community quality of life and public health, safety, and welfare, which is the fundamental purpose of local government.

Expand Village Staff to Support Community Projects

Currently, much of the work in the Village is done by the elected Board members and various other Commissions. This is cost effective; however, it puts a significant burden on those elected and appointed officials and can result in a lack of capacity to achieve major community objectives. Given the scale of needs in Ellsworth, it is worth considering an expansion of Village staff to address issues of code enforcement, planning and development, and infrastructure. The first step may be in reconsidering the role of Village Administrator. The Village has an opportunity with the hiring of a new Village Administrator to redefine the position and hire someone that can take more of a management and oversight role. The position can be posted in a way that attracts candidates who have experience with planning and development and can take responsibility for managing development in the Village. This would alleviate some of the burden on the Board and Plan Commission by providing expert recommendations and guidance in that process. It may also benefit prospective developers by ensuring more consistency in the development process.

The Village Board should look to similar communities to get a grasp of their staff levels and positions to determine what, if any, expansion needs to occur in Ellsworth. It is also critical to look at the Village budget to determine where needed funding will come from for any new hires. Given limitations on tax increases, it may be difficult to hire more than one or two people so it will be critical to target needed hires for the most critical positions. This will be an on-going issue as Ellsworth grows to ensure adequate staff to meet community needs and ensure adequate service for residents and businesses.

Support and Build Capacity at Local Organizations

The final goal for this section recognizes the value of the larger Ellsworth community, notable the variety of organizations, clubs, and civic groups that are serving residents and businesses. These organizations provide significant benefits to Ellsworth and much needed services that can help achieve the goals of this plan as well. The key is to ensure these organizations have the capacity to be successful and achieve their mission. This is not a Village government function, per se, rather it is an opportunity for the Village to work with and support these organizations in achieving their goals and in ensuring nobody is working at cross purposes or overlapping each other when not needed.

The first step would be to conduct an annual community summit to bring together all the various groups. This summit would be an opportunity to review the comprehensive plan as well as identify opportunities for each group to take ownership of various community projects and coordinate action. The summit would also be an opportunity to build relationships and ensure on-going, open communication across groups. This is vital to supporting one another and moving the community forward together. It is a low-cost opportunity to strengthen social capital in Ellsworth and partnerships for success.

Another opportunity is for organizations to have effective communication with the larger community. This is necessary to build support, find volunteers, and ensure organization success. One option may be to create a Community Organization page on the Village website that has information and contact details for community groups. Additionally, community groups can partner on communication to share resources and contacts with one another. It is difficult to get attention from people so having consistent messaging and a variety of methods of outreach is important, which makes sharing resources vital for success.

Additional opportunities include the development of a newcomer packet for new Ellsworth residents. This may be an information page on the Village website

that highlights existing businesses, local organizations, and other resources. It may also be a physical packet that realtors and landlords can provide to new residents. This can include brochures and coupons from local businesses as well as other information about Village resources, etc. The goal is to let new residents know about what is available in town so they patronize local businesses first. Another resource can be developed for new and prospective business owners. This can include information about business assistance programs and contacts like Pierce County Economic Development and others. It can also provide information on Village resources that may be helpful. The goal is to make it easy for a prospective business owner to know the resources and assistance available. These packets can be developed by the Chamber of Commerce as a service to its members and to support economic development in Ellsworth. Events are another opportunity to build relationships and share information. The Chamber of Commerce, E3, and others can host events, inviting newcomers, potential entrepreneurs, and others to an informal meet up to share ideas, meet one another, and learn about Ellsworth. These events can help new residents feel more welcome in the community, share information about local businesses and organizations, and encourage engagement. For prospective business owners and entrepreneurs they can meet other local business leaders, learn about available assistance and resources, and have an opportunity to expand their network to support their new business.

Given the limited capacity and resources of the Village government, supporting community organizations that can take ownership of projects and help achieve community goals is vital to successful plan implementation. These efforts will provide on-going benefits to Ellsworth by building relationships and networks and leveraging the resources of the community to solve problems and address community challenges. Government should not be the only entity working towards community success, every resident and business can be part of achieving goals and making Ellsworth economically vital and sustainable. It will

also be important to recognize that these organization have their own responsibilities, interests, and capacity. It should be understood that the recommendations in this plan may not align entirely with specific organization responsibilities. However, by including them in the comprehensive plan, they can be part of the conversation and organizations can determine if they should be incorporated into their work plans.

Community Connectivity

Community connectivity is about ensuring accessibility for all Ellsworth residents and visitors. It identifies opportunities for improvements to the transportation network throughout town for all modes of transportation, with a focus on improving pedestrian and cycling access. During the public engagement process, walking and cycling were identified as priorities, with residents indicating strong support for improving facilities for these users. Goals in this section support the Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities, and Economic Development topics from the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning law and will ensure Ellsworth provides efficient and safe access for residents and visitors with the following goals:

- Ensure Adequate Maintenance of Existing Sidewalks
- Expand Sidewalk Capacity and Access to Community Destinations
- Improve Connection Between Ellsworth Creamery and East End
- Wayfinding and Signage
- Improve Main Street

Ensure Adequate Maintenance of Existing Sidewalks

Before investing in new infrastructure, it is important to ensure proper maintenance and upkeep of existing facilities. This means focusing on the existing sidewalk network in Ellsworth to make sure they are functional and safe for all users. The first step is to develop an inventory of existing sidewalks and their conditions. This can be done by Village staff, the Parks Board, or even finding volunteers like area high school students. They can use simple paper maps to mark where sidewalks exist and the condition of those sidewalks. Camera phones can be used to capture images of sidewalk conditions, like uneven pavers, large cracks, etc. that create a safety hazard. This inventory can become the starting point for addressing those safety issues and the Village can set aside funding for safety improvements as money is available. If sidewalks are not safe, people will not use them, and given that many pedestrians are elderly, people with strollers, etc. safety should be a priority. The Village has already

identified areas in need of attention, including one on Main Street that are being addressed.

Along with safety improvements, ensuring proper drainage and possible icing is another issue. As part of the inventory, a website or other tool can be used for people to report sidewalk issues such as major puddles and / or icing in the winter. These issues make sidewalks impassable and discourage pedestrians from using them. It is important to identify areas where this is happening and work with property owners to address issues that may be contributing to drainage and icing. This may include storm drains that discharge onto sidewalks, etc. and are not necessarily a Village issue to address. Property owners should be made aware when their actions are impeding sidewalk access and encouraged to take action to mitigate the issue.

Along with this, snow removal can be an issue for sidewalk access, particularly for elderly or disabled residents. They may be unable to clear snow from the sidewalks. This is an opportunity for community engagement to assist these property owners through volunteer efforts. Local civic groups, Boy and Girl Scouts, high school clubs, and other organizations can take ownership of helping residents clear snow from sidewalks in front of their properties. Businesses and commercial owners also need to take responsibility for ensuring sidewalks across their properties are cleared in a timely fashion. The Village should send reminders of this to all commercial property owners and consider more assertive enforcement for properties that do not respond. Sidewalks are a key element in community connectivity and ensuring proper maintenance and access is a fundamental service to residents to promote walking as an alternative to driving.

Expand Sidewalk Capacity and Access to Community Destinations

As mentioned, pedestrian access was identified as a priority during public engagement for the comprehensive plan. This includes sidewalks to community destinations and more recreational focused access, such as trails and pathways. People want to be able to walk safely and comfortably, both to go

places and for exercise and recreation. Additionally, improving pedestrian access will make Ellsworth more attractive to visitors. If people can park once and feel comfortable walking to various destinations they will spend more time (and more money) while in Ellsworth. Improving access improves quality of life for residents and is also an economic development opportunity.

The first step is to identify key community destinations. Main Street and the East End, including Ellsworth Creamery, are the main retail hubs, offering a variety of shops and restaurants. These areas have sidewalks; however, access to them is problematic from surrounding neighborhoods. The schools also have sidewalks on the streets immediately surrounding them, but again, access from neighborhoods is limited in many cases. Summit Park also would benefit from improved access. These are the key destinations and providing connections should be a priority. This would allow children to safely walk to school, reducing traffic and congestion during morning drop off and afternoon pick up, allow access to parks without having to be driven and make a significant improvement in quality of life.

The next step is funding to pay for new sidewalks. The Village has limited capacity to invest in sidewalks and will need to look for external funding assistance to help offset costs. There are a variety of programs available from Safe Routes to School to Wisconsin Department of Transportation funding (<https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/aid/funding-bp.aspx>). However, just finding money to pay for sidewalk installation is not all that is required, the Village must recognize that on-going maintenance and upkeep will have to happen. It is not helpful to build new sidewalks if there is no funding for maintaining them for the long term. It is important that the Village review its budget to ensure adequate maintenance funding will be available before investing in new sidewalks.

Sidewalks and trails can be contentious as property owners do not want people crossing their property, do not want to have to shovel, and other issues. It

is important to have on-going outreach and communication with property owners along proposed routes to build support for installing sidewalks. The conversation should focus on the benefits of sidewalks in terms of quality of life and economic development to build support and overcome resistance. This conversation is a long term investment and should not be overlooked when planning for sidewalks and connectivity.

Finally, as funding is available, the Village should install sidewalks and trails to connect key destinations and enhance safety. This will be an on-going effort that will require significant community support and buy-in. Emphasis should be on ensuring safe access to schools first and foremost, then focusing on connecting other community destinations like Main Street and East End and Summit Park. These improvements will result in benefits to economic vitality as visitors spend more time and money in Ellsworth walking between destinations, but most importantly provide free access for Ellsworth residents to move safely and comfortably about their own community.

Improve Connection Between Ellsworth Creamery and East End

Ellsworth Creamery is both a major employer and a tourist destination for Ellsworth. Tens of thousands of people come for the cheese curds and encouraging them to spend more time in Ellsworth will benefit local businesses and the overall economy. One way to do this is to improve the connection between the Creamery and the East End. The East End is home to a variety of bars, restaurants, and shops that serve locals but would also be of interest to visitors. The area does currently have some issues with buildings that are not properly maintained and overall appearance; however, by encouraging more visitors to the area, those properties will be incentivized to redevelop as there will be more business demand.

The Village should work with property owners in the area to encourage them to spruce up their properties. Other goals in this plan provide strategies for this effort, but it should be combined with improving access to the area. A sidewalk already exists between the Creamery and East End; however, it is not very



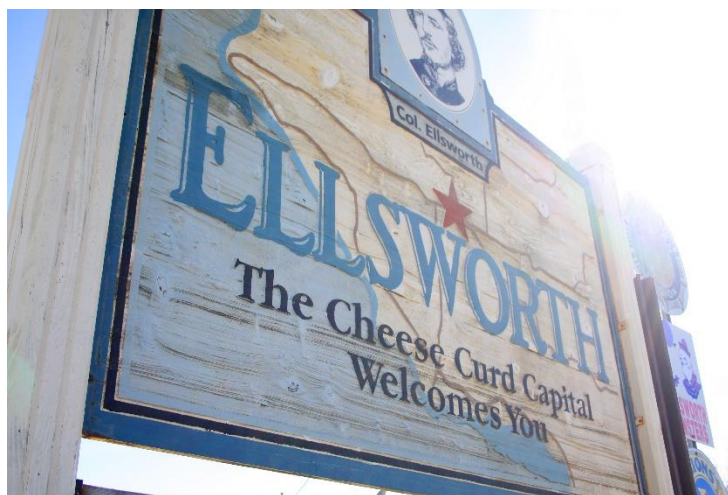
welcoming and there is no signage encouraging people to walk to the East End. This is a relatively low cost opportunity to install signage to direct visitors from the Creamery to the East End by highlighting the businesses in the area they can visit. The

Creamery has a few historic photos posted on its buildings, more of these can be installed and potentially murals added where appropriate to improve the overall appearance. These murals could highlight other local businesses and attractions and be part of the wayfinding efforts discussed below.

As the East End begins to revitalize, other improvements can be added to make the area more attractive and appealing to residents. This includes installing landscaping, benches, lighting, and other amenities to improve the pedestrian experience. Expanding connections to East End Park will also help the area by connecting the greenspace to the shops and Creamery. Again, the goal is to encourage visitors to spend more time in the area and improving pedestrian access is one way to accomplish that. People can visit the Creamery, walk over to the East End for lunch, and then visit East End Park for the kids to have some fun before getting back in the car for the next stop.

Wayfinding and Signage

As mentioned, Ellsworth has multiple community destinations, yet it can be difficult for visitors to know where they are and what is available, along with knowing where parking is available. Improving wayfinding and signage throughout town offers an opportunity to create an image for Ellsworth through the branding of signs along with the benefits of directing visitors. The first step is to develop an image for signage to be installed that projects a positive image. Many communities start with the colors of the local school district, but whatever is



selected, it should be used throughout marketing and branding for the Village. Once the image is determined, locations need to be identified for installing signage. These should be key intersections and at 'gateway' points to the different parts of town. These locations will ensure visitors have information to direct them to desired destinations and parking. Welcome signs should also be included as part of the improvements to provide a gateway feature to Ellsworth.

An important element of wayfinding is to scale signage appropriately. Signage on roadways will obviously be larger and provide less detail but will point to parking and primary destinations. Once out of their cars, signage needs to be in place at parking areas to direct pedestrians to specific destinations within the District. Signage for pedestrians can be more detailed, offering walking times to various destinations along with other information like community history, building details, etc. These small details make the pedestrian environment more welcoming and engaging, encouraging people to spend more time walking to various spots. And, the more time people spend in town,

the more money they are likely to spend supporting local businesses. Wayfinding and signage is a key element in fostering economic vitality and creating identity and character, this effort will have long term benefits and is worth the investment of limited public resources.

Improve Main Street

Main Street in Ellsworth is also a state highway, which presents challenges for community-focused projects. Any improvements need to be coordinated with the state Department of Transportation and there are limited options for improvements because of this. Ellsworth has an opportunity in the next several years to begin developing a plan for desired improvements so when the DOT comes back for the next round of highway improvements, there is a plan in place for desired pedestrian improvements and access to go along with improvements for automobiles.

One of the key issues identified during public engagement was the sidewalk conditions along the roadway. There are issues with height differences and sidewalk pitch making accessibility an issue, especially for those with mobility impairments. This is an area where the Village may have some leverage with the state to ensure ADA compliance and accessibility and any safety issues should be pursued as a priority. New crosswalks were installed in Spring 2022, providing safer access to cross Main Street. This is a significant improvement to the area to increase access and comfort for pedestrians moving between businesses on Main Street.

Another opportunity is to provide clear directions to public parking to ensure visitors (and residents) can easily find parking in the area. There is adequate parking for Main Street; however, some of it is off the road and people may not be aware of it. Ensuring adequate signage to direct people to available parking and ensuring safe access from parking to businesses should be a focus of attention and investment along Main Street.

Truck traffic along Main Street is another issue identified by residents. Because it is a state highway and is a primary connection north to Interstate 94, trucks are a common feature through the downtown. One issue identified is the intersection of Main Street and Highway 65, the only stop light in Ellsworth. As configured, this intersection can be difficult for trucks to traverse and the lack of a left turn signal from Hwy 65 onto Main Street contributes to congestion. The Village should work with the state to make needed safety and congestion improvements to this intersection to improve traffic flow and access.

The goals identified in this section will improve connectivity in Ellsworth for drivers and pedestrians alike. It will make it easier and more desirable for residents and visitors to reach community destinations by walking or cycling, reducing traffic and congestion. These efforts will take concerted, long term investment to be successful; however, the benefits will be significant in terms of improving economic vitality and quality of life for Ellsworth residents. These should be priority investments for the Village, working with the State, County, and local partners to improve accessibility and safety to key community destinations.

Community Character

Community character is a broad area with goals that require public and private investment and partnerships. These goals target economic opportunity, housing, and quality of life. These goals will ensure Ellsworth is an attractive community for businesses and residents with a high quality of life and opportunity for all. This section addresses the following topics: Housing, Economic Development, Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources, and Utilities and Community Facilities with the following goals:

- Improve Parks and Recreation Facilities
- Ensure Housing Diversity and Availability
- Develop Building Renovation / Façade Improvement Program
- Support Diversified Economic Development Opportunities

Improve Parks and Recreation Facilities

Ellsworth residents place a high value on parks and recreation amenities. Throughout the public engagement process, expanding and improving park resources and facilities was identified as a community priority. The challenge for Ellsworth, as with implementing much of this plan, is the limited capacity of the Village in terms of funding and staffing to significantly expand desired facilities.

Any park expansion or new facilities will mean needed funding for on-going maintenance, supervision, and so on, which means the Village will be responsible for not just building new things, but the continued cost each year. This is not to say improvements should not be



made, just that any improvements should be made with an understanding that the costs of installation and construction are just the beginning of needed funding, so any expansion should be carefully considered in terms of long term budget impacts.

One of the first things to consider is to create a Friends of the Parks organization. This non-profit organization could take some responsibility for supporting local parks and help with fundraising, programming, and other needs. By having a non-profit organization, additional funding sources could be tapped and there would be a group with ownership for park improvements adding capacity to the Village. Additionally, the Friends group could take responsibility for developing a Parks Master Plan that would provide more detail into desired park improvements and ensure resources are targeted most effectively. Given challenges in finding volunteers and people willing to lead an organization, making this recommendation may seem like a stretch; however, given the desire for park improvements among residents, it is likely there would be support for an organization tasked with this responsibility. Having a non-profit to support the parks would make implementation of park improvements more likely to happen and should be a priority for community action.

As mentioned, developing a Parks Master Plan would be helpful to ensure park improvements are made in the most efficient and effective manner based on community priorities. From the public engagement for this plan, walking trails, playground equipment, a dog park, splashpad, and pavilions rose to the top of desired amenities. The Village already provides most of these; however, they are not all accessible for all residents. A Parks Master Plan would also provide an opportunity for comparison with national standards as to what similar communities offer in terms of facilities and programming. A Parks Master Plan may also be required for some grants to help fund projects. This should be considered by the Village as it would provide on-going benefits as investments into the park system are made.

As mentioned, a few projects were identified during the public engagement process including trails, additional playground equipment, pavilions, etc. Improving pedestrian accessibility has been discussed elsewhere in this plan, so adding walking trails to the mix should be a priority. Walking trails can be

incorporated into the overall transportation system to provide recreation and accessibility, so investing in these facilities can serve multiple purposes. As the Village focuses on pedestrian accessibility, it will make walking safer and easier as a means to recreate and access community destinations. As for other amenities and features, it will be dependent on funding availability as to what and when things are added to the parks system. The Village should pursue all available funding options, including local fundraising and sponsorships to help pay for desired improvements. Many cities have had success with fundraising programs like 'Buy a Brick' or selling naming rights to facilities. There may be an opportunity for local businesses to invest in park improvements and be recognized with placards or signage. This is an opportunity for a Friends organization to really take ownership as the Village does not have the staff or resources to pursue this activity. The Village can work towards finding grants and other assistance to help pay for desired improvements. The list below offers some suggestions for potential funding sources:

- Wisconsin DNR <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/Grants.html>
- Wisconsin Grant Watch <https://wisconsin.grantwatch.com/cat/34/sports-and-recreation-grants.html>
- Play and Park Structures <https://www.playandpark.com/funding/grant-opportunities>

As funding becomes available, improvements can be made along with ensuring adequate funding for maintenance so any facilities remain an amenity to the community.

Finally, there is an interest in recreation programming for youth and adults. Ellsworth offers a variety of programming supported through the Library, the school district, and local entities like Little League. It is important to continue these services and look for opportunities to expand programming when funding and staff allow. This may include more organized sports leagues, summer programming, and continuing education. This is not necessarily something the Village government should take ownership of, instead, it can facilitate and

support other organizations that are offering services. This can include partnerships to access public facilities and spaces and coordination with the school district for access to their resources, as already happens with the swimming pool.

Ensure Housing Diversity and Availability

In both the survey and town hall meetings, support for housing diversity was widely expressed. Ellsworth residents recognize the need for housing availability at a variety of incomes and a variety of types (single family, multi family, senior, etc.) to ensure all residents can find a home that meets their needs. There is also a desire to promote housing types that support a family through different phases of life, from starter homes to senior living, that will allow residents to transition housing and not have to move to a different neighborhood or even different town to find appropriate housing. The land use section has some recommendations for revising the zoning code to promote more housing diversity, this is a key step to ensuring housing availability and affordability. The goal is to support development that meets local needs and priorities and the ordinances are the starting point for that.

A vital opportunity available to address housing needs is to support existing property owners with the maintenance and upkeep on their homes. This is both an economic and environmentally sustainable activity to reduce costs for homeowners and reduce energy consumption. It is beneficial particularly for senior and low income residents to have access to this type of assistance that can help them stay in their homes and ensure the homes provide adequate shelter. WestCAP (<https://westcap.org/>) and Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (<https://www.weca.coop/energy-assistance>) are organizations that provide this service to qualifying homeowners in Ellsworth and should be leveraged to connect residents who are eligible. Other assistance can include providing low flow fixtures to residents at free or reduced costs and requiring their use in redevelopment and new construction. This reduces water demand

and saves money for the Village. Outreach and education is vital to inform residents of the economic and environmental benefits of reducing consumption of water and electricity. These efforts can have significant savings for the Village and consumers as the costs for expanding infrastructure are not necessary because of conservation.

The Village has been working with non-profits and other housing providers (like WestCAP) to support affordable housing development in town. In addition to WestCAP, other options may be Habitat for Humanity, if the Village can make property available for them to construct housing. The old junior high school is another opportunity for needed housing development as the Village now owns the property and can ensure that property is developed for needed housing. This will not meet all the demand for new housing but will help to meet the need for lower cost housing that is a priority for the community.

Finally, Ellsworth is an aging community and the need for senior housing will only continue to grow. There is currently very limited options for residents looking for senior living facilities ranging from independent living to assisted living facilities. The Village should work to encourage this type of development by promoting Ellsworth to senior housing developers. These facilities provide more than just housing, they are also significant employers. The Village should consider making senior housing a target for economic development activities and look for opportunities to meet this need.

Develop Building Renovation / Façade Improvement program

Ellsworth has historic and unique architecture, particularly in buildings on Main Street and the East End. Unfortunately, some of these buildings have not been properly maintained and their appearance is detracting from overall aesthetics of these areas. Many property owners may be struggling financially and unable to make needed improvements and conduct necessary maintenance on their buildings, leading to the deterioration. It is in the interest of the Village from both a public safety and welfare standpoint and an economic

development perspective to provide assistance to property owners to improve building appearance and ensure proper maintenance.

One tool is a façade improvement program, which offers financial assistance to property owners. Some communities provide grant funding for this, while others use low interest loans instead. For Ellsworth, a low interest loan pool might be the best option given limited financial resources. The Village could work with local banks to set up a low interest loan fund, potentially with private investors as part of the mix. These loans could be offered to local property owners to make improvements. As the money is repaid, the capital is kept in the loan pool to be loaned out again, while banks and investors make a small amount from the interest paid on the loans. The City of River Falls has a program like this that has been successful in helping local businesses improve their properties at a relatively small public investment (<https://www.rfcity.org/580/Revolving-Loan-Program>). The Village may also consider a Tax Increment District for improvements in particular neighborhoods like the East End. This would allow the Village to make needed investments in infrastructure and other facilities to benefit the area and repay the bonds through increased revenues collected as property values increase. The Village should research other community programs to determine what makes sense for Ellsworth and what is feasible for local conditions before undertaking any kind of façade program. However, given the opportunity with revitalization for fostering economic sustainability, this should be a priority for community action.

Support Diversified Economic Development Opportunities

Ellsworth is fortunate to have a diverse economy with a variety of primary employers like Ellsworth Creamery among others, and a range of retail and restaurant options. As the County seat, Ellsworth also has significant public employment. This creates economic vitality that benefits residents; however, there was much discussion about the need for more economic development, particularly in the retail and service sector. Residents wanted more options to

meet daily needs in town rather than having to drive to neighboring communities. This is a common challenge in rural communities, and the entire retail sector is currently struggling to address changing consumer expectations, workforce issues, on-line shopping, and a variety of challenges. However, fostering economic development should be a priority for community action, and Ellsworth is fortunate to have a variety of resources to assist in this effort.

The Chamber of Commerce takes an active role in promoting Ellsworth businesses and offering support for business development. They provide a range of services for existing businesses and help to connect prospective businesses to additional resources like Pierce County Economic Development, as well as state and federal assistance. This work should be supported and continued. As discussed elsewhere, a prospective business owner information packet should be developed as well. This tool can be provided to local entrepreneurs to connect them to available resources and assistance. It can be an on-line tool as well as physical media to make as available as possible.

The Village and Chamber should also work with existing businesses to identify and address potential challenges to their success. Chamber and Village leadership should regularly communicate with business owners to foster on-going relationships and ensure any issues are identified and work done to accommodate needs. When business owners have a connection to their community, they are more likely to keep their businesses local and invest in expansion rather than relocating to another community. This is critical to fostering economic success and growth.

Finally, the Village should ensure adequate land is available for economic development. The future land use plan identifies areas for further commercial and industrial growth, it will be important for the Village to ensure adequate land is reserved for these uses in the face of residential growth. Additionally, having adequate infrastructure will be necessary to accommodate

employment growth, so investments are needed to support that, particularly with wastewater capacity.

Add Landscaping / Lighting

Landscaping can be used to improve community appearance, address stormwater runoff using LID principles discussed above, help reduce temperatures, and make Ellsworth more appealing for pedestrians. Parklets, raised beds, and other elements can be added at key locations throughout town and have significant impact with relatively low investment. The Village should work with local businesses, property owners, and residents to identify areas that would benefit from landscape installations and make investments as feasible. This can include planter boxes, hanging baskets, and other features along Main Street and in the East End, as well as improvements in road medians and in the ROW of roadways.

Obviously, maintenance and upkeep of landscaping will be an issue. One way to minimize this is to use native plants which require less irrigation and maintenance because they are suited to the Wisconsin environment. Additionally, local garden clubs, high school groups, and others can be recruited to help maintain beds. Sponsorships by local businesses may also be an option to help offset costs and help with maintenance. Small spots of color and interest scattered throughout Ellsworth can make a big difference in community character and appearance and can have big results for a relatively small investment.

Another issue as part of improving the pedestrian experience is to ensure adequate lighting. As sidewalks and trails are expanded, sufficient lighting should be included in these projects. This makes the pedestrian experience more comfortable and safe and will encourage people to walk more. Advancements in LED lights have made it much more cost effective to have adequate lighting, so there is no reason to leave areas under-lit. This just discourages activity and reduces the opportunity for people to access parts of

town that feel unsafe. Another consideration for lighting is to install lights that do not contribute to light pollution, so the light is focused downward rather than up and out. This protects the view of the stars and the rural feel of Ellsworth.

The goals identified in this section are among the highest priority from the comprehensive plan. They reflect the desires of Ellsworth residents to build a community that is welcoming to all while ensuring residents have access to affordable and appropriate housing and economic opportunity. These goals represent opportunity for action from across Ellsworth, not just expecting local government to solve problems, instead there are opportunities for local organizations and volunteers to engage to make Ellsworth a more desirable and sustainable community.

Community Content

The final set of goals is about building on the existing strengths of Ellsworth. There are so many strong organizations and activities already happening and those should be supported and celebrated. It is also about celebrating Ellsworth and the rich history and identity of the community. The opportunities represented here will help to engage residents and foster relationships within Ellsworth. These goals address topics of Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources, Economic Development, and Inter-governmental Cooperation by the following:

- Add public art throughout Ellsworth
- Add history / informative signage and pictures
- Develop more robust communication strategy
- Expand Farmers Market
- Support Library and Senior Center
- Consider Community Center
- Ensure Ellsworth remains a vibrant and welcoming community

Add Public Art Throughout Ellsworth

Public art can be an enormous attraction to bring people to town. Visitors like to see creative features and sites and many will travel just for that. Ellsworth has murals on some buildings in downtown and landscape elements and utility boxes have also been painted in creative ways. This quirky, unique thing could become a branding opportunity if more residents and businesses choose to participate. The Village may also choose to take a more formal approach with the following actions:

- Identify spaces for art (e.g. murals on blank walls, spots for sculptures, etc.)
- Identify funding options for art installations / support for local artists
- Support utilization of space for art installations

The first step is to identify appropriate sites for public art. These should obviously be in high visibility sites and where passersby can access and coordinated with investments in landscaping and lighting discussed above. There may be an opportunity to create an art trail through town to encourage people to walk or

otherwise travel through town to see the various installations. Part of the goal for this is to keep people in town longer and therefore spending more money to support local businesses. Once sites have been identified, a funding effort should be undertaken to raise money to support local artisans to produce works. Some funding opportunities include:

- Wisconsin Humanities <https://wisconsinhumanities.org/grants/grants-awarded/>
- Wisconsin Arts Board <https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/pages/Community/GrantPrograms.aspx>
- Arts Wisconsin <https://www.artswisconsin.org/resources/public-art-resources/>

This can be an on-going program where installations are done as funding allows and should include public and private spaces throughout Ellsworth.

Add History / Informative Signage and Pictures

Along with public art, installing historic photos and information kiosks is another opportunity to encourage people to visit Ellsworth. There are many historic sites and buildings throughout town that offer an opportunity to inform visitors of the unique heritage of Ellsworth. These informative elements can be included with landscaping and lighting as discussed above and will be an attraction for visitors. Again, all of these recommendations are intended to drive interest in Ellsworth and provide reason for people to spend more time in the community.

An opportunity exists for the Library and Senior to participate in this effort, potentially through the collection of oral histories from long time residents and finding appropriate images and information to include in the kiosks. A longer term effort could include the development of a historical 'trail' that connects different destinations with stops along the way. Users can connect via an app on their phone to listen to oral histories and other presentations about Ellsworth to go with the static displays. This type of amenity is not a huge expense, but can be a significant attraction.

Develop More Robust Communication Strategy

An issue identified during the public engagement was how to keep residents informed and engaged. Despite the fact that nearly everyone has a smart phone and is on social media, it can be difficult to spread the word about local issues, events, and activities. Despite the challenge of getting people's attention, it is important to make every effort to keep residents informed so they can actively participate in community decision-making. One of the first steps is to develop partnerships. This can be part of the annual Community Summit discussed earlier in the plan, where the Village, School District, and other local organizations come together to discuss issues and opportunities. Part of this meeting could be to get everyone on working together to coordinate messaging and outreach. This is not to say everyone has to sing from the same page, but really to make sure that messaging is coordinated where possible to make it more effective and meaningful for residents. This will help them to pay more attention if they can get a concise presentation rather than feeling overwhelmed with different messages from a host of organizations.

Social media and the internet are powerful tools for communication but they can also be overwhelming. The Village should work to ensure its website is well organized, engaging, and provides needed information in an easy to access way. Social media can be leveraged with targeted information and through local ambassadors who can help amplify messages and content as needed. These ambassadors can be Village Board members and others who can leverage their networks to help spread community messages.

The local newspaper is another tremendous asset that should be supported as much as possible. The Village should ensure on-going communication with newspaper staff and reporters, making sure they are kept informed of Village activities and encouraged to post stories and information. Local newspapers are struggling and that contributes to the lack of focus on local events and activities because people tend to focus more on national issues because that is the news

they hear about. Keeping a local paper can help to offset this and provide a forum for community outreach.

Expand Farmers Market

Farmers markets are an opportunity for local producers to sell their products in their communities, develop relationships with customers, and make more money than they otherwise could. For communities, farmers markets are an attraction for residents and visitors looking to find the best available produce, dairy, meats, and other goods. They attract people to the community who then shop at other local stores, eat at local restaurants, and build the economy. A farmers market also provides an opportunity for local artisans and others to establish a market for locally produced goods. This is an opportunity for local volunteers to step up, with assistance from the Village in terms of location (potentially), to expand the existing Farmers Market by attracting more vendors and encouraging local participation. The group running the market should reach out to neighboring communities to identify best practices and actions they can take to help build the market. This should include contacting local farmers, artisans, and other potential vendors (such as local food trucks and musicians) to participate to increase the attraction of the market and build interest. Another resource is the Wisconsin Farmers Market Association (<http://www.wifarmersmarkets.org/>).

Support Library and Senior Center

Ellsworth is fortunate to have a strong Library and Senior Center serving residents with a variety of programming and services. The Library is in process of moving to a new location that will allow to build on its strengths and offer even more to the community. Throughout the public engagement process, residents expressed gratitude for the Library and all that it offers as well as the benefits of robust programming from the Senior Center.

The Village provides funding for the Library in partnership with Pierce County, this is, and should remain, a priority to ensure they continue to have needed

resources for their services. The Library is also in process of developing a strategic plan to help direct their resources to services and programming most beneficial to Ellsworth residents. Having a strong library provides needed recreational services, a place for people to spend time and build relationships, and is fundamental to community quality of life.

For the Senior Center, they are currently determining how best to fit within the new Library facility and how they can continue to best serve their clientele. This organization runs on a variety of funding sources and efforts to ensure adequate funding should be supported to continue their service. On-going outreach and communication should continue with leadership at the Senior Center to identify needs and address any issues they may have given the benefits they provide for Ellsworth seniors.

Consider Community Center

Discussion of a Community Center came up in several meetings over the course of the planning process. The idea for the Center would be a space for community events and rental space suitable for things like family reunions, wedding receptions, and so on. There are facilities available to meet some of this demand, but not a dedicated community space that is available year round and provides amenities like a large kitchen space, etc. Because the space would be available for rent, much of the maintenance and upkeep costs would be captured by rental fees.

Additionally, the Community Center could provide space for community programming, such as continuing education, youth activities, winter markets, and the like. Again, some of this is currently handled at the library and school facilities, but the opportunity to have a Community Center is an opportunity to create a gathering place for residents. It would also provide an option for events that would otherwise be held elsewhere, like reunions and receptions. These activities could support local businesses like catering, flower shops, etc. and keep more money local.

If the Center had a commercial kitchen, this could also present an economic development opportunity as the kitchen could be used as incubator space for local entrepreneurs starting a food business. Local caterers could use it for food prep, bakers or other food makers could produce goods for sale in the space to meet regulations regarding food for sale preparation. These services could help these start ups get their business going with lower costs and help create jobs in Ellsworth.

Ensure Ellsworth Remains a Vibrant and Welcoming Community

The final goal is addressed by all of the actions identified in this plan. By addressing economic opportunity, housing diversity, recreational amenities, and the other goals, Ellsworth will be a welcoming and vibrant community. However, there are a few additional actions that can be taken to move the ball on this. The first is to build on the existing range of activities, festivals, and events that happen throughout the year. Whether it's the weekly Farmers Market, or the annual Cheese Curd Festival, these activities are fun for residents and attract visitors. However, they are a burden for the volunteers and organizations that run them. It is vital that on-going work to recruit volunteers and maintain organizational support is vital to ensuring the on-going success of these activities. It should be a focus to ensure that existing events are on sound footing before working to create more.

That being said, having more events can be enormously beneficial by creating more sense of community and reasons for people to come to Ellsworth. There should be on-going communication with the Chamber of Commerce and other entities to identify willingness and support for events throughout the year. These do not have to be weekend long festivals, even a monthly street dance or concert in the park (which is a regular event now) can be fun times and put together will less work than a major festival. Artisan markets, food truck pop ups, events like that can be organized relatively easily and be a fun time that brings people together.

The County Fairgrounds was also identified as an under-utilized amenity for Ellsworth. There are some issues in getting access to the space and working with the County Fair organization; however, this property could be more effectively utilized to host events and activities throughout the year. It has needed



infrastructure (water, electricity, etc.) to support large events and should be used as much as possible to take advantage of the investment in those facilities. There should be an effort to work with the County Fair organizations to understand their concerns about using the property more frequently and work to create a win win solution.

Lastly, residents identified a need for more retail businesses in Ellsworth, particularly those providing activities and entertainment, along with more restaurants. This should be a target for economic development activities to attract service businesses. This is difficult because there is not much incentive that can be offered for these businesses, and they will locate in areas with larger markets than Ellsworth can provide. However, some marketing can be done and working with property owners to identify and market suitable properties can be beneficial. Additionally, supporting local entrepreneurs who have an interest in starting this type of business should be supported as well.

Conclusion

Reading through the comprehensive plan may feel overwhelming because of the long list of goals and actions that are identified. However, it is important to recognize this is a long term plan and represents a community-wide plan. It is not meant just for the Village government to undertake projects, instead, there are opportunities for the community to come together and tackle issues together. This spreads the work and makes accomplishing the goals much more feasible. By implementing this plan, Ellsworth will be well-positioned to deal with existing challenges and ensure future development meets community priorities and is in line with the values of Ellsworth residents. It is an opportunity to create the future that meets the needs of current and future generations.

Land Use

Ellsworth is located in west Central Wisconsin and is the county seat of Pierce County. The area is rural in character with agricultural land surrounding the developed areas of Ellsworth. This contributes to the character of the community and the feeling of being in a unique space that is different from neighboring communities, unlike the sprawling suburbs of the Twin Cities where there are not distinct boundaries between jurisdictions. The land use in Ellsworth is primarily single family homes, with distinct commercial and industrial areas providing local jobs and services to residents. Ellsworth also has areas with steep slopes and topography that present challenges to development, notably on the east central part of the Village.

Current Land Use

The majority land use in the Village is single family homes. These are found throughout the Village and there is little transition from retail and commercial uses to single family homes in most areas. Most of the single family homes are on relatively small lots, creating a classic small town feel to the neighborhoods. New neighborhoods do tend to have larger lots with homes set farther from the street and front facing garages, creating a more conventional suburban feel to these areas. Ellsworth has fairly limited multi-family developments that are located throughout the Village, so no single area is dominated by multi-family housing. Figure 1 is a current land use map, showing the existing development patterns in the Village and immediate surrounding area. The map is not a Zoning map, instead it indicates how the land is currently developed. The map was developed through a 'windshield' survey of the community conducted in late 2021.

Ellsworth has multiple commercial and retail nodes providing primarily local service (restaurants and local retail). Highway 65 on the north edge of town has larger commercial uses like auto dealerships, commercial storage facilities and

the like. Main Street (Highway 10) serves as the primary commercial district with many restaurants, grocery stores, and similar businesses. Finally, the East End is another commercial area with a mix of boutiques, bars, and related businesses. Despite Ellsworth having a significant attraction in Ellsworth Creamery, most of the businesses in town serve local clientele and are less geared towards tourism and visitors. One challenge for Ellsworth is the issue of accessibility between the different commercial districts, rather than having a concentration in one area that can serve as an attraction for visitors, shops and restaurants are separated into distinct areas.

Ellsworth also has multiple areas of industrial uses. The industrial park to the north has access to Highway 65 and straightforward access from there to I 94 to the north. Ellsworth Creamery and another area of industrial development are on the eastern edge of the Village. Access to these businesses is somewhat limited and drives significant truck traffic along Main Street through the Village. However, the benefit of these businesses is critical to maintaining economic opportunities in the Village and ensuring adequate access is a key goal for the comprehensive plan.

Ellsworth has two Village parks, Summit Park with 16 acres of open space fairly centrally located in north central Ellsworth. It has ball fields, playground equipment, pavilion space, and other amenities. East End Park is located on the east side of Ellsworth and has pavilions and other recreational amenities. It is also the location of community events and festivals that attract residents and visitors to Ellsworth. Cairns Woods park includes a walking trail on the west side of Ellsworth providing a location for walking and cycling. The public schools have playground equipment and a pool that is available for public use as well.

Future Land Use

Ellsworth is expected to see relatively slow but steady growth over the next 20 years (see Demographic Analysis). This level of growth can be accommodated within the existing Village limits given the amount of vacant and agricultural lands available for development. Additionally, there may be opportunities for redevelopment of existing under-utilized property as can be seen with the repurposing of the vacant Shopko into a hydroponic facility and the potential redevelopment of the vacant junior high site. The benefit of building on vacant sites and redeveloping under-utilized properties is that it takes advantage of existing infrastructure (water and wastewater, roads, etc.) rather than requiring new construction. This uses these resources more efficiently and does not add to maintenance costs for new facilities. It also generates more property tax revenue providing additional resources for community projects. Focus for new development in Ellsworth should be on infill and redevelopment where possible.

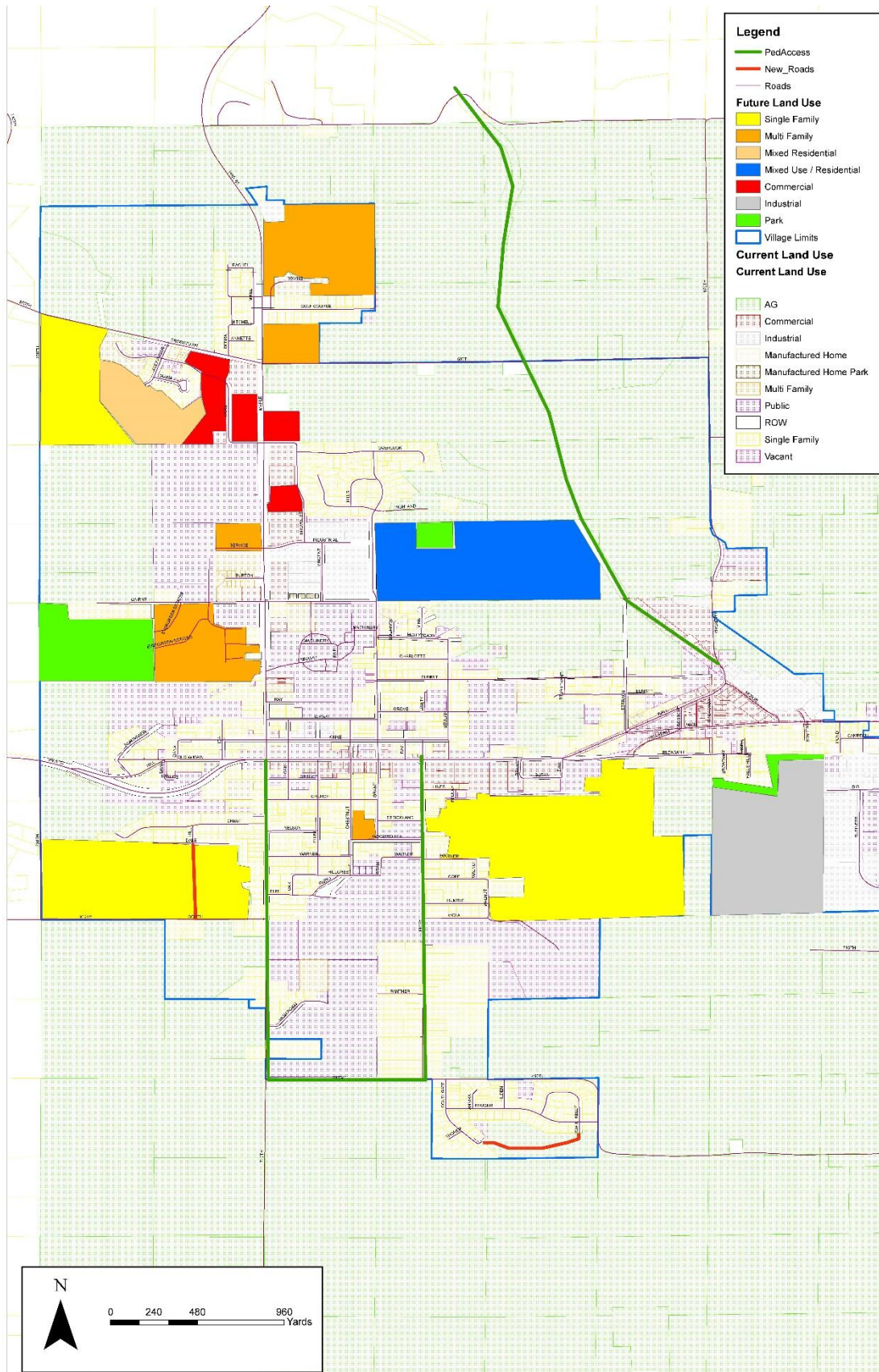
Figure 2 is the Future Land Use map that provides additional recommendations for desired development patterns. This map was created by the comprehensive plan Steering Committee and reflects existing development patterns, available infrastructure, and an expectation to ensure adequate residential diversity for residents of different incomes and household characteristics, as well as economic diversity and employment opportunities for residents.

Three areas are identified for primarily single family housing development. Two are in the south of Ellsworth, in proximity to Village schools and retail areas. These areas adjoin existing single family neighborhoods and should be developed in line with the older homes in Ellsworth on smaller lots, with sidewalks, alleys, and provide more pedestrian accessibility than the larger lot, suburban style neighborhoods. This type of single family housing allows for lower infrastructure costs because lots are smaller, and may be a more affordable

option for prospective homeowners and renters. The single family area to the north is in an area with newer development on larger lots. It may be suitable for this area to have more of that characteristic to allow for a different housing option for those wanting larger lots and a different character to their neighborhood. Additionally, in all single family neighborhoods, duplexes and potentially triplexes should also be allowed. This type of mixed development allows for greater diversity of incomes to have access to housing and can be developed in a way that is complementary to the character of the development so the multi-family properties are in character with the single family homes. This 'gentle' density is beneficial for residents by providing more housing than would otherwise be available. Accessory dwelling units ('granny flats') should also be allowed as they provide a lower cost rental option and additional income for property owners who can rent the ADU's or use them for multi-generational family housing.

There are multiple areas designated for multi-family or mixed housing development. These areas are not necessarily intended for large apartment complexes, instead, they should be a mix of townhomes, smaller multi-unit complexes, bungalow courts (units surrounding common open space, garden homes, and the like. The opportunity in these areas is to create a diversity of housing options for prospective owners and renters to find appropriate housing. Flexibility in design and standards allows for development to meet market demand and changing household characteristics and needs. Ideally, neighborhoods will be developed that cater to a range of age groups, family characteristics, incomes, etc. that allow residents to find housing to meet their needs in the moment and to be able to stay in the same neighborhood over time as their housing needs change. For example, a newly married couple could rent an apartment for a few years, then purchase a garden home when

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they have a child, move to a larger home with additional kids, and retire to a townhome when their children leave the nest. All in the same neighborhood.

Another opportunity area is the mixed use / residential area on the northwest side of town. This area is intended to be another area for mixed residential uses but also incorporate commercial and retail uses, such as corner stores, cafes, small retail uses, etc. The idea is to create the feel of a traditional neighborhood that had a mix of uses in a pedestrian-oriented environment. These types of neighborhoods are growing in popularity as people recognize the value of having basic needs available without having to get in their car. It also creates the opportunity for more community vitality and connection as people are encouraged to walk through the neighborhood and interact with one another in shared open spaces.

New commercial and industrial areas are focused on the existing commercial and industrial centers of Ellsworth. These areas offer access to existing infrastructure and are in proximity to similar businesses. It is important to identify adequate commercial and industrial land for future development because many communities have lost economic opportunities because of limited land availability for those uses. Ellsworth has a strong mix of businesses and primary employers, so maintaining this is vital for continued economic success.

Finally, parks and open space are a key issue, identified in public engagement as a priority. Three areas have been identified in the future land use map; however, it should be noted that every new development should incorporate open space, whether residential or commercial. These open spaces do not have to be fully developed parks, but greenspace should be part of every development plan approved by the Village. Although current Village parks are centrally located, they are not accessible to all residents without a car. Every Ellsworth resident should have access to open space within walking

distance. This allows children and the elderly to access recreational amenities without being dependent on someone driving them. Additionally, greenspace contributes to higher quality of life and higher property values, so it is a win win to invest in open space and recreation amenities.

Accessibility is another key issue. Access to sidewalks and trails is identified as a priority in the comprehensive plan, so every effort should be made to enhance access for pedestrians and cyclists. New developments should have sidewalks throughout and existing neighborhoods should be retrofitted as funding allows. Additionally, new streets and street reconstructions should consider cycling facilities as well. This can be as simple as a painted bike lane which is sufficient for low traffic, low speed neighborhood streets. For heavier trafficked areas, it may be worth considering protected bike lanes and where feasible, separate bike and walking trails to ensure safety and comfort for cyclists and pedestrians. There are also opportunities to connect to regional trail networks and facilities for cyclists and walkers. These regional facilities attract visitors and would generate tourism in Ellsworth if connections were made. This is an economic opportunity as much as it is a quality of life issue for current residents. Providing safe and comfortable pedestrian and cycling facilities is a cost-effective way to increase accessibility and quality of life in Ellsworth.

It is important to note that the Future Land Use map is not a zoning map, it does not limit what can be built. Rather, it is intended as a guide for future development to inform decision-makers on the desired development patterns that residents support and want to see. It is up to elected officials and Village staff to ensure the vision outlined here informs their development decisions and helps guide what is built in Ellsworth so that the character, identity, and quality of life is enhanced by growth and not lost in the desire for development at any cost.

Recommendations

The zoning and subdivision ordinances are the primary tools the Village has to regulate new development. To achieve the desired goals of the future land use plan, some changes to the existing ordinances are recommended and are suggested below.

In the residential zones (R-1 and R-2) the minimum lot size is 8,400 square feet with a 66' frontage. This is a relatively large lot size and can affect home affordability by reducing the number of homes that can be built. It is suggested that minimum lot size be reduced to allow for more variety of housing to be built, such as garden homes (homes with essentially zero lot lines) and similar products that offer more affordability and the opportunity for shared open space rather than private yards. This is not to say that larger lots single family homes should be prohibited, rather that more flexibility be provided to allow developers to meet market demand.

Another issue is the 25' front setback. One of the characteristics of walkable neighborhoods is the interaction between homes and the sidewalk. This cannot happen when homes are set so far back from the property edge. Instead, homes should be allowed to be closer to the sidewalk or street edge which creates a more comfortable pedestrian environment and the opportunity for people to sit on the front porch and engage with their neighbors. This is supported by the inclusion of alleys and rear parking rather than having driveways and garages dominate the front side of homes.

Parking requirements are another potential barrier to development, particularly multi-family facilities. The current standard of two parking spaces per unit is excessive for most multi-family developments, particularly those with studio and one bedroom units. Requiring excessive parking adds cost to the development, increases impervious surfaces, and results in developments that are less pedestrian friendly and attractive because so much space is required

for parking lots. The parking standard should be reduced to encourage more multi-family development and reduce costs. Commercial parking requirements are also an issue. The requirement of 1 stall per 500 square feet of space results in parking lots nearly as large as the buildings themselves. The average parking space is 300 square feet (including ingress and egress way) so requiring that much parking reduces development potential of businesses as so much land is used simply for parking. Many cities are recognizing the opportunity in reducing parking requirements and are doing away with parking minimums, Ellsworth should consider reducing their requirements to support more sustainable and pedestrian friendly development.

The Village should also consider adding a mixed use zone that allows for a mix of uses to be developed. Many developers are using Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) as a means to achieve this type of development and to avoid restrictions created by proscriptive zoning ordinances. It is very difficult to write a zoning code that allows for flexibility, so PUDs provide that opportunity. However, a mixed use zone would allow the Village to create a district with standards that meet Village priorities and values to support flexible development while meeting community goals. This type of development would allow for a mix of housing types and low intensity retail uses (cafes, corner stores, etc.) that are complementary and create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. These types of neighborhoods are becoming more popular and would offer Ellsworth residents a diversity of housing and employment opportunities. These recommendations should be considered as the Village reviews and revises their ordinances to achieve the goals of the comprehensive plan.

Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide is where the rubber hits the road with the Comprehensive Plan Update. It provides clear direction on the actions necessary to implement the Plan's goals along with responsible parties for that work. This section should be reviewed and utilized in the day to day decision making process of Village leadership, and should definitely be included in any major decision making such as bi-annual budgets, capital planning, and when development proposals are being considered.

The goals have assigned timelines; however, it is important to note that the priorities are guidelines intended to focus attention on particular activities but not be exclusionary of action taken when opportunities arise. For example, an objective may be listed with a 2026 start date but if a grant were available to undertake the work, or a volunteer stepped up to take on the task, it should be done immediately given that opportunity. Additionally, the goals are structured in a way to include community organizations, volunteers, residents, and other entities that can take responsibility for implementation.

Often, communities reach the end of a planning process, adopt the plan, and think the work is over. This is not the case, the real work is only beginning. It is important to identify a responsible party who can take ownership of plan implementation. This does not mean this body has to do all the work themselves, instead, their role is to coordinate action and ensure that goals and objectives are being undertaken as outlined in the plan. They can work with the identified responsible parties to ensure they are moving forward and have the necessary resources to accomplish their tasks. They can ensure the Plan is utilized to inform decision making by the Village Board and others. Often, the Planning Commission is the responsible party given its role in development and planning for the community. It will be up to Village leadership to identify who will take ownership of the Comprehensive Plan Update and ensure goals are achieved.

This Comprehensive Plan Update is grounded in public engagement and reflects the priorities and interests of the residents of Ellsworth. Implementation will ensure Ellsworth continues to be a strong community with a high quality of life and the heritage and character of the community are preserved.

Goal: Expand Wastewater Capacity

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Conduct smoke testing and other evaluations to identify potential infiltration points and other issues	January 2023	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Address identified issues (drains flowing into sanitary sewer, infiltration points)	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Pursue all available funding opportunities to expand service (https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/sources.html)	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Consider bond referendum for needed funding / matching grants if other funding found	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Adopt low impact development standards for new construction to mitigate stormwater runoff and better manage infiltration	January 2023	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of funding

Stakeholders: Residents, businesses, Pierce County, Wisconsin DNR

Costs: Smoke Testing \$30,000 - \$50,000; Plant Expansion \$2,000,000 - \$5,000,000

Potential Funding: Wisconsin DNR, other state and federal grants, bond referendum

Goal: Develop Plan for old Junior High School

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Identify funding for demolition (County ARP funds, other sources)	June 2022	6 Months	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Consider Tax Increment Finance District to help fund costs of improvements and support redevelopment	June 2022	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Consider developing a plan / RFP for the space once demolition has occurred	January 2023	6 Months	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Market property to developers, particularly housing developers	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Cost of demolition, potential site contamination / hazards (lead paint, soil, etc.)

Stakeholders: Village of Ellsworth, Village of Ellsworth residents

Costs: Dependent on demolition needs (if lead paint, other hazards, costs could be fairly high)

Potential Funding: State and Federal grants, County support, TIF District bonds

Goal: Review and Revise Village Ordinances to Support Community Goals

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Review existing ordinances to identify potential weaknesses / barriers to implementing community goals	6 Months	In progress / January 2023	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Review other community ordinances to identify best practices and potential revisions	1 Year	In progress / January 2023	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Prioritize review and revision of Development Ordinances, building codes, lighting, signage, and landscaping	1 Year	January 2023	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Resistance from residents / property owners to proposed changes

Stakeholders: Residents, business and property owners

Costs: Staff Time, Village Attorney fees

Potential Funding: General Fund

Goal: Expand Code Enforcement to Ensure Consistent Compliance with Regulations and Standards

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Develop education and outreach campaign to inform property owners, businesses, etc. that enforcement will be ramping up	January 2024 (or when ordinances are revised)	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Add Code Enforcement page to Village website with summary of regulations and links to resources for residents to find assistance in complying with codes	January 2024 (or when ordinances are revised)	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Develop list of resources and potential assistance for property owners to encourage coming into compliance with regulations and support for those who need help to do so (e.g. revolving loan fund for façade improvements, etc.)	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Work with local churches, volunteers, civic organizations to provide assistance to property owners	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, local churches, volunteers, civic organizations	Short Term
Enforce building codes and ordinances to improve appearance of buildings, particularly on Main St and East End	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Consider hiring code enforcement officer to take responsibility for on-going enforcement. Explore potential for shared position with Towns, other Villages to reduce costs	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term

Potential Barriers: Resistance from residents / property owners, cost of enforcement, lack of capacity for enforcement, unclear / inadequate ordinances and standards

Stakeholders: Local business and property owners, Village of Ellsworth

Costs: \$60,000 - \$100,000 for full-time code enforcement officer (salary & benefits)

Potential Funding: General Fund

Goal: Expand Village Staff to Support Community Projects

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Review budget and determine potential for hiring new staff	Budget Planning	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term
Utilize Village Administrator position to provide needed services and expand capacity to undertake community-focused projects by revising position description and expectattions	Budget Planning	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Funding

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: \$150,000 - \$200,000 (salary and benefits) for Village Administrator

Potential Funding: General Fund

Goal: Support and Build Capacity at Local Organizations

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Consider annual 'Community Summit' to bring together Village and local organizations to discuss issues and opportunities, identify projects to work towards, review Comp Plan progress, etc.	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term
Conduct outreach and education to boost membership and engagement in local orgs, particularly Chamber of Commerce	January 2023	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, E3, local businesses	Short Term
Support fundraising activities and encourage local sponsorships, memberships, and participation	January 2023	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, E3, local businesses	Short Term
Develop products and events to highlight benefits of membership (e.g. Newcomer Welcome Packet for new residents highlighting local businesses; Business Support Resources connecting existing businesses and prospective business owners to resources; Newcomer Happy Hours)	January 2023	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, E3, local businesses	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of interest from organizations, lack of volunteers

Stakeholders: Chamber of Commerce, E3, Village of Ellsworth, local civic organizations

Costs: Minimal

Potential Funding: Local fundraising, membership fees, private and public grants

Goal: Ensure Adequate Maintenance of Existing Sidewalks

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Develop inventory of existing sidewalks and condition	January 2023	6 Months	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Prioritize safety and access issues and make necessary repairs	June 2023	On-going (as budget allows)	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Work with property owners to ensure proper snow removal	October 2022	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, property owners	Short Term
Address drainage / water issues that may cause icing and other issues	June 2023	On-going (as budget allows)	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of support from property owners

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: Dependent on needed repairs

Potential Funding: General Fund

Goal: Expand Sidewalk Capacity and Access to Community Destinations

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Identify key destinations and pathways for access	January 2025	6 Months	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term
Identify potential funding sources (Safe Routes to School, DNR, etc.)	June 2025	On-going (as budget allows)	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term
Work with property owners to acquire needed easements / access	When funding available	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, property owners	Medium Term
Install sidewalks as funding allows	As funding is available	On-going (as budget allows)	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of support from property owners

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: ~\$9 per square foot for installation

Potential Funding: State and federal grants, private grants, bond referendum for high priority projects

Goal: Improve Connection Between Ellsworth Creamery and East End

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Install crosswalks, lighting, signage to identify path to East End from Creamery parking lot on existing sidewalk	After / along with improvements to East End	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth, E3	Medium Term
Install landscaping, benches to make more welcoming; Work with building owners to add murals and other elements	After / along with improvements to East End	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth, E3	Medium Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of support from property owners, lack of attractions in East End

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners; Ellsworth Creamery

Costs: Dependent on identified projects

Potential Funding: Private and Public grants, Bond Referendum, local fundraising

Goal: Wayfinding and Signage

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Develop community branding for East End, Midtown, Uptown districts	January 2024	1 Year	Chamber of Commerce, E3, local businesses, community representatives	Short Term
Develop and install signage incorporating branding to direct visitors to destinations, parking, etc. (Signage should be scaled for pedestrians or vehicles depending on location)	January 2025	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of support from property owners, lack of attractions in East End

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: \$150,000 - \$250,000 depending on number of signs, etc.

Potential Funding: Local fundraising, General Fund

Goal: Improve Main Street

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Identify necessary improvements for ADA compliance, safe access for all	June 2026	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Identify improvements for vehicle access and safety (light placement at Hwy 65 and Hwy 10, etc.)	June 2026	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Wayfinding and signage to available parking along Main Street	January 2025	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Develop vision / plan to work with WiDOT when next major project comes up (bump outs, median, etc.)	January 2028	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, WiDOT

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: Dependent on identified projects

Potential Funding: State funding, Bond Referendum

Goal: Improve Parks and Recreation Facilities

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Develop a Friends of the Park organization to support park development and raise money	January 2023	1 Year	E3	Short Term
Consider developing a Parks Master Plan	January 2024	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth, Friends of the Park, E3	Short Term
Research potential funding sources for desired improvements	January 2024	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Friends of the Park, E3	Short Term
Prioritize needed improvements (walking trails, pavilions, playground equipment, skate park, pickle ball, dog park were highest from public engagement)	January 2024	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth, Friends of the Park, E3	Short Term
Continue / expand recreation programming	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Friends of the Park, E3, School District, local sports clubs	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of leaders / volunteers to create a Friends organization

Stakeholders: Local residents and business owners

Costs: Dependent on identified projects

Potential Funding: Private and Public grants, Bond Referendum, local fundraising and sponsorships

Goal: Ensure Housing Diversity and Availability

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Review and revise ordinances to support housing development	January 2023	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Connect homeowners and landlords to resources for housing maintenance and upgrades (WestCAP weatherization, etc.)	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Support non-profits and others to develop affordable housing options (e.g. WestCAP, Habitat for Humanity)	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Encourage senior housing development	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Funding, resistance from property owners

Stakeholders: Business owners, prospective residents, developers and builders

Costs: Staff time and Village Attorney fees to revise ordinances, minimal for other efforts

Potential Funding: General Fund

Goal: Support Diversified Economic Opportunities

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Work to attract additional retail / entertainment businesses	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, Pierce County Economic Development	Short Term
Work with existing businesses to identify challenges and opportunities and connect them to resources (Pierce County Economic Development, regional partners, state and federal programs)	January 2023	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, Pierce County Economic Development	Long Term
Develop Business Support Resources connecting existing businesses and prospective business owners to resources and include on Village website and Chamber website	January 2023	On-going	Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Short Term
Work with property owners / building owners to encourage involvement in economic development (building upkeep and appearance, rent / price considerations, marketing, etc.)	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce	Short Term
Ensure adequate land available for economic development (zoning for industrial / commercial uses, adequate infrastructure and access)	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of interest from prospective businesses (proximity to Red Wing, Hasting, River Falls, etc.)

Stakeholders: Business owners, property owners

Costs: Minimal

Potential Funding: General Fund, Chamber Budget
Community Character

Goal: Add Landscaping and Lighting on Main Street and Other Key Corridors

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Identify areas residents feel unsafe due to poor lighting / other issues and prioritize improvements in those spaces	January 2024	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term
Install lighting and improvements as funding allows	January 2025	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Medium Term
Utilize space in parking lots, medians, etc. to add parklets (small green spaces with landscaping)	January 2026	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, E3	Long Term
Install raised beds / planters where appropriate and work with property owners for maintenance and upkeep	January 2026	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, local civic organizations, business and property owners, E3	Long Term
Improve appearance of medians	January 2026	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Long Terms

Potential Barriers: Funding, lack of support from property owners to maintain landscaping

Stakeholders: Business owners, property owners, local civic groups (volunteer maintenance)

Costs: ~\$2000 per street light installed, dependent on amount of lighting and landscaping installed

Potential Funding: General Fund, E3, local fundraising and sponsorship

Goal: Add Public Art and Historical Signage and Pictures Throughout Ellsworth

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Develop an inventory of sites suitable for art (e.g. building sides for murals, open space for sculptures, etc.)	January 2023	On-going	Business and property owners, E3	Short Term
Work with local artists to develop art projects for suitable locations (e.g. painters for murals, painting of landscape boxes, electrical boxes, etc.)	January 2023	On-going	Business and property owners, E3	Short Term
Support youth art programming	January 2023	On-going	School district, Business and property owners, E3	Short Term
Identify locations suitable for information kiosks / pictures to educate visitors about Ellsworth history	January 2023	On-going	Business and property owners, Pierce County Historical Association	Medium Term
Install kiosks and pictures as information is developed and funding is available	January 2023	On-going	Business and property owners, Village of Ellsworth, Pierce County Historical Association	Medium Term

Potential Barriers: Funding for installation / materials, maintenance of projects, support from property owners

Stakeholders: Business and property owners, local artists

Costs: Dependent on selected projects (e.g. paint for murals far cheaper than paying for a sculpture)

Potential Funding: Donations from local businesses (e.g. paying for the mural on their building), local artists, local sponsorships and fundraising, grants

Goal: Develop More Robust Communication Strategy for Residents and Local Organizations

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Identify potential partners /resources / avenues for communication	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term
Ensure Village website is regularly updated and well-organized to provide info to residents and visitors	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Develop coordinated messaging and outreach strategy	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term
Promote social media, websites, and other existing avenues of communication	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term
Continue to support local newspaper	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term
Consider annual 'Community Summit' to bring together Village and local organizations to discuss issues and opportunities, identify projects to work towards, review Comp Plan progress, etc.	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, other local organizations	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of engagement with organizations, lack of public interest and willingness to engage

Stakeholders: Chamber of Commerce, E3, School District, Pierce County, Towns, churches, other local organizations

Costs: Staff time for social media work, etc. (unless done by Board members, others)

Potential Funding: General fund

Goal: Develop New and Support Existing Community Events Throughout the Year

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Support the Farmers Market by expanding participation to more farmers, artisans, other vendors	January 2023	On-going	St Paul's United Methodist Church	Medium Term
Contact food trucks, musicians, others to expand offerings and develop 'pop-up' events during weekends year round and weeknights in summer	January 2023	On-going	St Paul's United Methodist Church	Medium Term
Ensure location and accessibility are maximized to provide opportunity for all to visit and benefit from the Market	January 2023	On-going	St Paul's United Methodist Church	Medium Term
Identify potential sponsors / volunteers to support additional community activities such as Summer Fun series and potential new events throughout the year such as artisan markets, food truck weekends, etc.	January 2023	On-going	E3, local churches and civic organizations	Medium Term
Work with County Fair organization to more effectively utilize fairgrounds throughout the year for activities and events, camping access	January 2023	On-going	Pierce County Fairgrounds, E3, local churches and civic organizations	Medium Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of volunteers to support events, lack of funding to pay musicians, others to perform, lack of space for events

Stakeholders: Pierce County Fairgrounds, E3, local churches and civic organizations, Village of Ellsworth

Costs: Dependent on event, artisan fairs, etc. could potentially raise funds by selling spaces, food truck events would have minimal costs. Concerts and similar events \$5,000 - \$20,000 for equipment, public safety, etc.

Potential Funding: Local fundraising, ticket sales, sponsorships

Goal: Continue to Support Ellsworth Library

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Work with library staff to identify needs and priorities	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Library, Friends of Ellsworth Library	Short Term
Explore potential partnerships with the library, school district, or other groups/individuals to determine the feasibility of creating an oral history program to capture local history and experiences from local residents.	June 2023	On-going	Ellsworth Library	Medium Term
Ensure adequate funding to support facilities and desired programming	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Library, Friends of Ellsworth Library	Short Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of funding, lack of space for all community desires and needs for programming

Stakeholders: Village of Ellsworth, Library, Friends of Ellsworth Library, library users

Costs: Recording equipment, studio space (\$10,000 - \$25,000 depending on space and improvements needed)

Potential Funding: Pierce County, towns, Local fundraising, sponsorships, general fund, private and public grants (<https://www.nal.usda.gov/legacy/ric-subjects/rural-libraries>)

Goal: Support Ellsworth Senior Center

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Work with Senior Center leadership to identify needs and challenges	January 2023	On-going	Senior Center, Pierce County ADRC, Village of Ellsworth	Short Term
Evaluate the resources and spaces needed to help maintain and strengthen the relationship between the library and the Senior Center	January 2023	On-going	Senior Center	Short Term
Ensure adequate funding to support facilities and desired programming	January 2023	On-going	Village of Ellsworth, Pierce County ADRC, towns	Short Term
Consider potential for stand-alone center to have own space and facilities dedicated to senior services	January 2027	On-going	Senior Center, Pierce County ADRC, Village of Ellsworth, towns	Long Term

Potential Barriers: Lack of funding for needed services / facilities, lack of staffing / volunteers

Stakeholders: Senior Center, Pierce County ADRC, Village of Ellsworth, local seniors, local service organizations and churches

Costs: Dependent on services offered and support from County and other funding agencies

Potential Funding: Pierce County, state and federal funds, local fundraising and sponsorships

Goal: Consider Developing a Community Center with Space to Support Community Events, Family Gatherings, Parties, etc.

Action	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Priority
Research other communities to identify desired facilities and elements to include	January 2028	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Work with community to develop list of desired elements and facilities (e.g. teen space, kitchen, etc.)	January 2029	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Identify suitable location that is accessible to all residents	January 2030	6 Months	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Pursue funding for design and construction and ensure adequate funding for maintenance and programming	June 2030	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term
Build structure and market as community asset	June 2031	1 Year	Village of Ellsworth	Long Term

Potential Barriers: Cost, lack of support from community, lack of funding to maintain once built

Stakeholders: Village of Ellsworth, Pierce County, local businesses, local residents

Costs: \$200,000 - \$500,000 depending on size, features included (e.g. commercial kitchen, etc.), and location (if land is purchased, price will increase accordingly)

Potential Funding: Private and public grants, local fundraising, sponsorships, bond referendum